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ABSTRACT

A survey of the methods of three feminist organizations offers general explanations for the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Limited to the emergence phase (1966-70) of the organizations, the survey examines the National Organization of Women (NOW), the Feminists, and the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) in terms of their definition of the major obstacle to be confronted, central goal, blueprint for the future, and methods of communication within and without their organizations. NOW specified sex discrimination as the major obstacle. Its goal was to reform the legislative status of women to ensure future equality. For the Feminists, man and his oppressive institutions were to be overcome. The goal was revolution and future equality for all human beings. WEAL perceived its major obstacle as sex discrimination. Its central goal was "responsible rebellion" with a view toward dignity for all humans. The groups' forms of discourse consisted of brochures, general releases, letters and memos, conference reports, and essays. They assumed easy passage of the ERA and their increased radicalization damaged their ability to secure its passage. (KC)

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ORIGINS OF CONTEMPORARY FEMINISM: SOURCE OF DIFFICULTY FOR THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

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ORIGINS OF CONTEMPORARY FEMINISM: SOURCE OF DIFFICULTY FOR THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT*

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." These twenty-four words constitute the text of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), a proposed amendment to the Constitution that generated considerable debate in the United States. First introduced into Congress in 1923, the amendment did not pass both houses of Congress until 1972. After an extension of the initial deadline, June 30, 1982 was set as the deadline for ratification by three-fourths or thirty-eight of the fifty states. By that date, however, the ERA still was three states short of passage; thus it died without becoming part of the Constitution.

The failure of the Equal Rights Amendment provides the opportunity to study and critically evaluate the strategies of the women's movement in its efforts to secure passage of the ERA. One starting point for assessing and understanding this failure is the origins of contemporary feminism as a social movement. In other words, what we can learn by studying the various groups which emerged to form the women's movement, the choices they made about the way to present issues and reach audiences generally, and the specific place accorded the Equal Rights Amendment in this overall scheme? To date, a systematic examination of this type has not been conducted. The value of such an examination is obvious because current ERA campaigns clearly are based in the attitudes and assumptions that the early women's movement made about the amendment. By looking at the emergence phase and the role of the Equal Rights Amendment in it, perhaps we better can understand the ERA's failure. This information can be useful not

only to participants in the women's movement, but to social movement critics, interested in the strategies a movement uses to achieve its aims, the obstacles to such success, and the overall functioning of a social movement.

Because this analysis will be limited to the emergence phase of the women's movement, the parameters of this phase first must be established. I am defining "emergence phase" as the period from the formation of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966 through the end of 1970. I set 1970 as the end of this phase because several factors suggest that 1971 represented the beginning of a second, legitimation phase: (1) Following the highly successful "Strike for Equality" on August 26, 1970, the press showed signs of dealing seriously with the women's movement;[2] (2) the National Organization for Women recognized lesbianism as a legitimate feminist concern, indicating that unpopular issues no longer were feared as endangering the movement's survival; (3) the first issue of Ms. magazine, a highly commercial, national feminist publication, appeared in January 1971, evidence of a substantial public for feminist views; and (4) the Equal Rights Amendment passed the House of Representatives in August 1971, to be followed by Senate Passage in March, 1972. The ERA previously had not passed both houses of Congress, although it first was introduced in 1923 (Stimpson, 1972:xiii). Its passage suggested that the movement was strong enough to accomplish major goals. This cluster of events, then, suggested that by 1971, feminism had entered a stable, if not wholly institutionalized phase, and had become accepted as a legitimate social movement, even by those still unable or unwilling to accept many of the movement's ideas.

I have selected three feminist organizations to represent the various thrusts of the movement during its emergence phase--Women's Equity Action League (WEAL), the National Organization for Women (NOW), and The Feminists. These groups were chosen because they seemed to represent the conservative, moderate, and radical positions within the women's movement respectively. The decision to deal with three groups from the spectrum of feminist positions allowed for the representation, in a sense, of every group, and at the same time made feasible a survey of the emergence phase as a whole.

To understand the approach of the women's movement in regard to the Equal Rights Amendment, I first will describe the origins of each group and the fundamental substantive differences among them. Specifically, I will distinguish each group's view of the enemy or major obstacle to be confronted, its central goal, and its ideal vision or blueprint for the future. I then will look at the types of material or discourse each group generated, the audience for which this discourse was intended, and the amount of coverage given to the Equal Rights Amendment in this discourse.[3] Following this examination of these groups, I will offer some general explanations that might account for the lack of success of the ERA.

The Content of the Discourse

The National Organization for Women

The idea for the National Organization for Women was born in June, 1966 at a Conference of Governors' Commissions on the Status of Women, held in Washington, D. C. General discontent was evident among the women, who were frustrated about the government's lack of initiative in establishing and enforcing laws and programs to upgrade women's status.

Betty Friedan, who was to become a major figure in NOW's inception, was present at the conference, interviewing government officials and conference delegates for a book about women and employment. She found herself increasingly encouraged to initiate a non-governmental, action-oriented organization for women--not only by those at the conference, but by readers responding to her earlier book, The Feminine Mystique, as well. As she herself explained: "I had personally been asked hundreds of times, 'why doesn't someone start a kind of National Association for the Advancement of Coloured [sic] People for women'" (Friedan, 1967:4).

Following a speech on the unfinished business of women's equality by Kay Clarenback, head of the Wisconsin's Governor's Commission, Friedan invited some interested women to her hotel room to explore the possibility of starting a new organization for women. These women decided to present a resolution to the conference calling for enforcement of Title VII by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; such a step perhaps would eliminate the need for an outside organization. When told, however, that the conference was not allowed to take any kind of action and, therefore, that the resolution could not be presented, the women were convinced that a new women's organization was needed. Each woman contributed five dollars, Friedan suggested the name, and Kay Clarenback agreed to serve as acting chairperson. With 300 charter members, NOW held its incorporating conference in Washington, D. C. on October 29-30, 1966, at which Friedan was elected to serve as the organization's first president.

Major Obstacle

NOW clearly specified sex discrimination as the enemy to be overcome before full equality for women could be achieved. A major rationale

for organizing, in fact, was to combat discrimination: "We organize to . . . break through the silken curtain of prejudice and discrimination against women" (NOW, 1966:1). Later in the Statement of Purpose, women are referred to as "victims of discrimination" (NOW, 1966:1). In addition, a NOW brochure focused on discrimination by asking such questions as, "Isn't it time to balance the teeter-totter of opportunity . . . to eliminate sex discrimination so your daughter has an equal chance" (NOW, n.d.)? At the same time, discrimination was not seen as unconquerable: "Today, our society discriminates against women. But, that can change. Tomorrow . . . the world can be free of sexist prejudice. If we do something about it NOW" (NOW, n.d.).

Central Goal

NOW's major goal followed logically from its identification of sex discrimination as the enemy. Its goal was to reform the legislative status of women and to change the attitudes behind the social structure. The legal system became a major target of attack because of its pervasiveness and strength: "We believe that the power of American law, and the protection guaranteed by the U. S. Constitution to the civil rights of all individuals, must be effectively applied and enforced to isolate and remove patterns of sex discrimination" (NOW, 1966:1). Thus, NOW dedicated itself to enforcing, changing, or removing existing laws that discriminated against women, as well as to legislating additional guarantees of equality.

But despite its attacks on current social and legal structures, NOW did not advocate their abolition or total overthrow, but essentially supported the existing system. Government and industry, for instance,

were asked to use their influence to improve women's status: "We urge American government and industry to mobilize the same resources of ingenuity and command with which they have solved problems of far greater difficulty than those now impeding the progress of women" (NOW, 1966:2). Other statements suggested more specifically NOW's desire to see women as active participants in the existing social system: "The purpose of NOW is to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now" (NOW, 1966:1).

But NOW also believed that changes in the social-political structure had to be accompanied by changes in current conceptions of women. Thus, NOW asked for a consideration, questioning, and eventual rejection of inaccurate attitudes about women. NOW specified major areas in which attitudes toward women were particularly degrading: "We will protest, and endeavor to change, the false image of women now prevalent in the mass media, and in the texts, ceremonies, laws, and practices of our major social institutions. Such images perpetuate contempt for women by society and by institutions" (NOW, 1966:2). NOW, then, attempted to reform society by working within institutionalized avenues available for change.

Blueprint for the Future

The ideal state of society, as described by NOW's discourse, is one of total equality. This ideal was summarized in the conclusion to NOW's Statement of Purpose: "To win for women the final right to be fully free and equal human beings" (NOW, 1966:2). NOW believed that the participation of both sexes was needed for equality to be realized; thus NOW was created to be "a working group of women and men concerned . . . about equality for all human beings, male and female" (NOW, n.d.). Women

were encouraged to join with men, not set themselves apart or demand superiority, in order to achieve "a fully equal partnership of the sexes" (NOW, 1966:1). The frequent repetition of the term "partnership" suggests the major place NOW accorded the concept of a male-female team.

The composite picture that emerges of NOW, then, was of a moderate, reformist group interested not in alienating men but in joining with them in the mainstream of society. Radical change was not seen as necessary, for if traditional channels were used effectively, legal as well as attitude change would result. As the first major national organization concerned with civil rights for women, NOW offered breadth in terms of platform as well as moderation, both of which were designed to appeal to a large, general public.

The Feminists

In the fall of 1968, an eight-member by-laws committee of NOW, including Ti-Grace Atkinson, president of the New York chapter, proposed the elimination of all NOW offices. The committee recommended that the organization operate by means of committees, with the chair chosen by lot from the general membership. This form of organization, according to the initiators of the proposal, would be a step toward removal of NOW's pyramidal structure in which power filtered down from the top, a system characteristic of the male-run social order. When the committee discovered, however, that NOW would lose its tax-exempt status if the national structure differed from that of the local chapters (Alexander and Fox, 1968), the proposal was amended to keep the basic structure intact but to rotate frequently the slate of executive officers in order to increase the number of members participating in decision-making.

On October 17, 1968, the New York chapter met and voted on the suggested revisions; the proposal was defeated by a vote of two-to-one. Following the vote, Atkinson handed in her resignation from NOW, explaining:

> I am resigning my office because, after last night as the final proof, I realize that by holding this office I am participating in oppression itself. You cannot destroy oppression by filling the position of the oppressor. I don't think you can fight oppression "from the inside." You either are on the inside or the outside and you fill one of those two ranks by your presence. Since I have failed to get rid of the power position I hold, I have no choice but to step out of it (Atkinson, 1974:10).

Atkinson instigated the formation of a new group initially composed of the NOW members who disliked the hierarchical system. Although first called the October 17th Movement, after the day of the split, the group changed its name to The Feminists in June, 1969 (Hole and Levine, 1971: 143).

Major Obstacle

For The Feminists, the antagonist to be confronted and overcome was man with his oppressive institutions, values, and class-oriented society:

> Right now we are living in a male universe. The male defines the terms of our existence, the limits of our growth. . . . He interprets the world to us and tries to see that we don't get at it directly. He has done everything necessary to undermine our individuality and

contaminate us with his TRUTHS (Kearon, 1969:1).

This enemy was seen as extremely powerful: "The male has had a protracted reign of power . . . his institutions grind on automatically" (Kearon, 1969:2). The strength and dominance of men, then, became the rationale for The Feminists' policies of separatism. As one example, no more than one-third of the group's members could be married or living with a man. For The Feminists, the difficulty many women have in rejecting contact with men only suggested the severity of their oppression: "The most anti-male feminists, who hold . . . that all men are the enemy, can still be seen walking down the street hand in hand with this very enemy" (Atkinson, 1974:91)!

Central Goal

The Feminists' major goal was revolution: "The Feminists was created to effect a revolution. We want to change the world" (The Feminists, n.d.:4). The Feminists believed that the development of feminist theory was the first step toward achieving this goal. According to The Feminists, many women's groups ignored the need for theoretical investigation and, as a result, their actions rarely were coordinated "so as to disclose more effectively the nature of male exploitation in all its interconnections" (The Feminists, n.d.:7).

The goal of theory building was accompanied by an equally strong emphasis on action. The group refused to elect permanent officers, for instance, in order to implement an egalitarian structure within the group. They also developed a disc system to protect against the unconscious emergence of natural leaders. In its public activities, too, The Feminists

remained consistent with its theoretical principles. It protested against the basic institutions of society, all of which were seen as male-oriented and therefore oppressive. One example was its protest at the New York Marriage License Bureau against the institution of marriage (Grimstad and Rennie, 1973:209). By stressing the need for action based on theory, then, The Feminists hoped to bring about revolutionary changes in the existing social structure.

Blueprint for the Future

The Feminists specified equality as the outcome of the revolution if it were achieved in its ideal form: "Equality among all human beings is, for us, both a premise and a goal" (The Feminists, n.d.:1). Recognizing the existence of similar potential within everyone, the implementation of equality became a means for overcoming the deficiencies and distortions in women's education, as well as for removing the oppressors from their current position of dominance: "Organized on the basis of equality, we will offer the alternative for the future society" (The Feminists, n.d.:5).

The Feminists, then, chose to focus on the development of theory followed by consistent, sustained activity in order to implement a revolution. The group saw itself as distinctive within the women's movement because (1) it put theory into practice, and (2) it totally rejected the male point of view. They believed women had to be separatists, in the beginning at least, because feminism still succumbed too easily and unconsciously to male power values. Atkinson summarized the group's position: "I see the problem of women from the woman's point of view. Women who empathize with the male role, that is, women who grasp the male point of view more than momentarily, are not feminists" (Atkinson, 1974:25). The Feminists saw

all other groups as accepting the very values women had to deny and overcome; such groups became shallow, superficial mockeries of women as a political class.

Women's Equity Action League

A group of professional women in Cleveland, Ohio, who were considering forming a NOW chapter, found themselves in opposition to NOW's increasingly liberal stances on abortion and child care. They also felt a need for legitimacy and responsible action in the women's movement in order to combat the militant image that had evolved. The result was a new organization called Women's Equity Action League (WEAL), which was incorporated on November 1, 1968, under the direction of an attorney, Elizabeth Boyer. WEAL generally had a more narrow focus than NOW and concentrated on educational and employment practices as the primary systems which discriminated against women. WEAL believed that laws would be the ultimate source of attitude change toward women--i.e., employers, for example, would be more willing to accept women in executive positions if federal, state, and local laws favored the equal treatment of women in employment practices.

WEAL also was proud of the fact that it worked quiety within the system to improve the status of women through education, legislation, and litigation. The organization purposely engaged in sanctioned tactics for change such as study projects, legal actions, lobbying, and the dissemination of information about women, so as not to offend or alienate the more conservative women and men who might be interested in women's equality. Demonstrations and picketing were discouraged as undiplomatic means that attract attention but which in the end hinder rather than help the

movement. Thus WEAL sought to work within the system to change the system, hoping to gain the respect of society at large by offering a constructive image of the women's movement.

Major Obstacle

Sex discrimination emerged as the enemy in the way of women's equality, according to WEAL's ideology. One of WEAL's brochures emphasized this obstacle:

> "Discrimination based on sex is just as real as discrimination based on race or religion or color or national origin and just as unlawful under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Yet it is so deeply embedded in the American way of life and the American way of business that few people recognize it as discrimination and fewer still understand that it is illegal" (WEAL, n.d.).

Discrimination also was listed early in WEAL's purpose clause--"to press for full enforcement of existing antidiscriminatory laws in behalf of women, to seek correction of de facto discrimination against women"--indicating its primary place among the group's goals (WEAL, n.d.).

Central Goal

"Responsible rebellion" was the ultimate aim designated in WEAL's literature: "Rebellion is inevitable, and WEAL stands for responsible rebellion" (WEAL, n.d.). That this end was consistent with WEAL's conservative nature becomes evident if the terms "rebellion" and "revolution" are compared. While revolution accomplishes radical alterations in a system or social condition, and more often than not involves a sudden overthrow of that system, a rebellion is more gradual and less drastic:

it is an uprising or organized opposition intended to change an existing government or ruling authority. Thus WEAL, in contrast to The Feminists, sought to avoid involvement in any radical confrontations and worked instead within established channels to achieve gradual change.

Blueprint for the Future

WEAL described the end result of its responsible rebellion as "real dignity." The group saw this dignity as characterizing not only women but all human beings: "it is only natural that women--along with other groups of human beings--should now seek equalities that will permit them to live with real dignity in contemporary American society" (WEAL, n.d.). WEAL attributed the lack of such dignity to women's low economic position: "As with almost any basic issue, this real dignity for women has economic implications" (WEAL, n.d.). WEAL, then, saw itself as playing a significant role in the attainment of human dignity by providing a place where women could participate in firm yet diplomatic activity.

The Form of the Discourse

After determining the differences in content among NOW, WEAL, and The Feminists, I turned to the forms of their discourse. To begin, I placed each piece of discourse from the three groups into one of seven categories: brochures, general releases, letters and memos, conference reports, news releases, speeches, and essays. This distribution is listed in Table 1.

The type of audience for which the discourse was intended--general public, specific public, general membership, group leaders--also was determined. The category "general public" was used to indicate those documents

Table 1

Distribution of Discourse

	NOW	The Feminists	WEAL	Total
Brochures	6 (4.4%)	1 (4.7%)	1 (5.5%)	8 (4.6%)
General releases	32 (23.3%)	5 (24.1%)	12 (66.6%)	49 (27.8%)
Letters and memos	46 (33.5%)	0	3 (16.6%)	49 (27.8%)
Conference reports	31 (22.6%)	0	0	31 (17.6%)
News releases	12 (8.7%)	1 (4.7%)	0	13 (7.4%)
Speeches	9 (5.5%)	8 (38.0%)	2 (11.1%)	19 (10.8%)
Essays	1 (.7%)	6 (28.5%)	0	7 (4.0%)
Total	137 (77.8%)	21 (12.0%)	18 (10.2%)	

intended for general reading/hearing by potentially all members of society. A "specific public," on the other hand, was defined as a particular individual or group seen as responsible for, or able to correct, an unsatisfactory situation. A letter sent to a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is one example of a document with an appeal to a specific public. Documents of interest to potentially all members of the organization were classified under the heading of "general membership," whereas the "group leaders" category included documents addressed specifically to those responsible for decision-making and the functioning of the group, such as board members, chapter presidents, or committee members. Table 2 shows the discourse categorized in terms of the audiences addressed.

Table 2

Distribution of Audience

	NOW				The Feminists				WEAL			
	General Public	Specific Public	General Membership	Group Leaders	General Public	Specific Public	General Membership	Group Leaders	General Public	Specific Public	General Membership	Group Leaders
Brochures	6	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
General Releases	9	3	20	0	5	0	0	0	8	0	2	2
Letters and Memos	1	14	8	23	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
Conference Reports	11	0	15	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
News Releases	12	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Speeches	0	7	2	0	8	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Essays	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	39	25	45	28	21	0	0	0	10	3	3	2
Percentage (%)	28.6	18.3	32.8	20.3	100.0				50.5	16.6	16.6	11.1

Finally, I categorized the discourse according to whether it dealt, in part or in its entirety, with the Equal Rights Amendment. This distribution is shown in Table 3.

Discussion

An informal survey of the discourse categorizations shows NOW to be the only group that used all of the seven categories--brochures, general releases, letters and memos, conference reports, news releases, speeches, and essays--during the emergence phase. This finding, combined with the fact that NOW generated substantially more discourse during the emergence phase (77.8%) than did either WEAL (10.2%) or The Feminists (12.0%), supports NOW's self-image as the umbrella group during this phase of the movement. NOW used quantity of discourse as well as multiple channels to distribute that discourse in order to reach as many audiences as possible. The Feminists, on the other hand, concentrated on reaching outside publics. As a relatively small group, extensive formal communication among members simply was not needed. Also, the group was extremely concerned about its autonomy and employed every means possible to avoid exploitation and infiltration. By not establishing formal, written channels of communication, the group minimized the amount of material that might leak out to the press or other outsiders. WEAL, in contrast, used predominantly formal media--in line with its preference for traditional channels of communication. With this general orientation in mind, we now can examine in more detail the treatment of the Equal Rights Amendment by each of these groups.

NOW

Not only was the highest percentage of NOW's discourse congregated

Table 3

Distribution of Discourse Dealing With the ERA

	NOW				The Feminists				WEAL			
	General Public	Specific Public	General Membership	Group Leaders	General Public	Specific Public	General Membership	Group Leaders	General Public	Specific Public	General Membership	Group Leaders
Brochures	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
General Releases	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Letters and Memos	0	1	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conference Reports	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
News Releases	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Speeches	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Essays	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8	1	12	5	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0
Percentage (%)	20.5	4.0	26.0	18.0					10.0	66.0		

in the "letters and memos" category, but the highest proportion of discourse dealing with the Equal Rights Amendment was found in this category as well. NOW seemed to be highly concerned with keeping its membership informed about its activites and used this channel to keep them informed about strategies related to the ERA.

General reports and conference reports were produced in almost equal amounts by NOW. The majority of the discourse in these two categories was addressed to NOW members rather than to outside publics. Seven conference reports mentioned the ERA, while four general releases did so. NOW seemed to concentrate, then, on coordinating activities among members and ensuring the group's own continuation by the substantial use of discourse directed to its own membership. In terms of the ERA, NOW evidently was concerned that its stand on the amendment and its strategies in regard to it be understood by its membership.

All of NOW's brochures were directed to the general public and all of these made some mention of the Equal Rights Amendment. NOW clearly was concerned, during the emergence phase, with more than its own internal affairs and coordination as far as the ERA was concerned. Those categories, however, in which discourse was directed inward--letters and memos, general releases, and conference reports--contained a total of 109 pieces of discourse, while only twenty-eight appeared in the news releases, speeches, brochures, and essays categories, aimed at reaching outside publics. NOW appeared to be primarily concerned, then, with intragroup interaction, a stance which probably stemmed from its desire to serve as the major feminist organization. Such a goal demanded that the group gain and hold a large, active membership, so it is not surprising to find that the group

devoted considerable effort to this end. A conclusion that emerges here, however, is that NOW clearly spent more time discussing the Equal Rights Amendment within its ranks than it did explaining the issues of the ERA to outside publics.

The Feminists

The Feminists did not mention the Equal Rights Amendment in any of their discourse produced during the emergence phase, although the concept of equality was an important one to them. That the group did not deal at all with the Equal Rights Amendment suggests its refusal to associate in any way with the existing, male-defined structure in society. Legislative changes, such as that proposed by the ERA, were viewed as inconsequential and even compromising in comparison to the changes women themselves had to make in their relationships to one another if the ultimate revolution was to become a reality.

Women's Equity Action League

In terms of discussing the Equal Rights Amendment, only one of WEAL's general releases, directed to the general public, dealt with the amendment. Both speeches, however, took the form of testimony presented to the Senate Subcommittee Hearings on the Equal Rights Amendment. This finding is in line with WEAL's image as a group which devoted its efforts to reaching those persons in positions of prominence who are capable of making changes in the legal structure rather than informing the general public about the need for change.

Implications for the Equal Rights Amendment

This examination of the discourse of the emergence phase of

contemporary feminism suggests three general conclusions about the movement that probably affected, to some degree, the nature of ERA campaigns and the eventual failure of the amendment. First, one can see evidence of an ideological continuum of issues within the women's movement. WEAL stood at the conservative end of this spectrum, focusing on legal/political change through institutionalized channels. The Feminists, at the other extreme, advocated radical changes within the fundamental institutions of society. NOW, on the other hand, functioned as a moderate feminist group and served as a facilitator for the movement as a whole. Each group, then, seemed to emphasize different themes and to fulfill different functions for the movement, a structure which suggests that movement hoped to avoid the mistakes of the suffrage phase. The suffragists, who confined their efforts to a single goal--the vote--disintegrated, for all intents and purposes, once suffrage was obtained (O'Neill, 1969:266-68). The contemporary movement, in contrast, gathered a variety of issues and tactics under its banner. Thus the Equal Rights Amendment, rather than being singled out for attention, was but one of many concerns. This strategy, though useful to the stability and maintenance of the movement as a whole, may have been detrimental to the passage of the ERA, since it did not receive the emphasis it needed for passage. Perhaps in future campaigns, some prioritization of issues is needed in order to achieve major goals such as that of the Equal Rights Amendment.

A second conclusion relates directly to the little attention given the ERA in the discourse of the emergence phase. The ERA was a major goal of the movement, despite the multi-issue orientation. Yet, this status was not apparent from the amount of discourse devoted to the ERA. In

addition, much of this discourse was directed internally to group members rather than to outside publics. The movement seemed to assume that the ERA would have no difficulty passing; it seemed logical to movement participants and as a result, little thought was given to selling it to outsiders. This attitude seemed to prevail despite the fact that a fight over whether or not to endorse the ERA had reached crisis proportions at NOW's second national convention, and despite the knowledge that efforts to pass the ERA had been unsuccessful since 1923. The movement seemingly ignored its early history as well as the dissension and internal resistance within the movement itself to the ERA--circumstances which usefully could have signalled with some accuracy the degree of resistance the amendment would meet outside.

The lack of caution over how to present the ERA also may have been compounded by the natural tendency of social movements to move toward increasingly radical positions. As feminism progressed through its emergence phase, its goals began to shift toward The Feminists' end of the spectrum. For example, whereas WEAL had been uncomfortable at first with abortion-on-demand and with a national system of child care, these became platforms which it came to support. As another example of this process, NOW once had refused to deal with the lesbian issue and, as noted earlier, at one time debated about whether or not to support the ERA. Again, these became accepted concerns for NOW by the end of the emergence phase.

A major reason proposed for this move toward radicalization is the presence of the media. Berg argues that in an effort to gain attention, any social movement must seek out the media--and even stage media events or engage in radical behavior in order to attract media attention.

Messages designed initially only for media impact, though, often have a self-persuasive effect:

> If, therefore, someone is led by the requirements of media access to articulate a position more radical than . . . private belief, the person's belief structure could be expected to move in the same direction. This may account at least in part, for what appears in recent years to have been the progressive radicalization of a number of individuals, groups, and movements (Berg, 1972:263).

While such radicalization may have been acceptable if not desired by the movement as a whole, its participants needed to consider more carefully the image such radicalization would create and how this image would impact on the acceptance of feminist issues. A third conclusion, then, from this study is that the movement failed to take into account how its increasingly radical positions would damage its ability to secure passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Several factors, then, within the emergence phase, seemed to be contributing factors to the defeat of the ERA: (1) the desire to avoid a single-issue orientation; (2) the assumption of easy passage; and (3) the increasing radicalization of the movement. If an Equal Rights Amendment ever is to be ratified, participants in the women's movement will need to look critically at and to address these factors, and to do so in a way that rectifies these mistakes the next time around.

All of the questions raised by the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment cannot, of course, be understood by studying the emergence phase of feminism. Also needed are studies of the movement from 1970 to 1982 in order to determine how ERA strategies evolved and developed from the

movement's beginnings as I have described them here. Future studies of this type may well give cause for modification, qualification, or elaboration on the conclusions drawn here. Until such investigation of other stages in the women's movement are made, however, any conclusions drawn are only tentative. Even so, this study is useful to social movement critics on several levels. First, it provides a comprehensive compilation of the discourse of the emergence phase of the women's movement--data now available to others to make use of in a variety of ways. In addition, it suggests a method for studying the stages of a social movement, an often difficult and overwhelming task. Finally, this study offers an initial assessment of the movement's strategies in regard to the Equal Rights Amendment upon which further studies can build.

FOOTNOTES

*An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the National Women's Studies Association conference, Arcata, California, June 1982. It is based on the author's doctoral dissertation, "Ideological Manifestations in the Discourse of Contemporary Feminism," University of Iowa, 1976.

[1]The stages of a social movement have been described in many ways by social movement researchers and critics. A classic formulation is that proposed by King (1953), who described the internal stages of a social movement as follows: (1) conducive background circumstances; (2) the incipient phase; (3) the organizational phase; and (4) the stable phase. Rosenwasser (1974) described the stages in the growth of the women's movement specifically, categorizing them as: (1) genesis and impetus; (2) action and reaction; (3) conversion and change; (4) revision and solidification; and (5) success and silence. I prefer to conceptualize the stages of a movement as: (1) emergence; (2) legitimation; and (3) institutionalization. I see the emergence phase as encompassing King's organizational phase, but see the stable phase as consisting of two parts. In the first part--legitimation--the movement begins to receive positive coverage by the media and societal acknowledgment of its existence. In the institutionalization phase, the movement becomes a recognized social group within the system, rather than a group fighting against the system. In other words, its ideas become so accepted by society at large that it adopts many of the system's practices, no longer receive media coverage as a deviant group, and essentially becomes respectable.

[2]See, for example, the New York Times editorial, August 28, 1970, p. 24.

[3]For this analysis, I collected every piece of discourse I could locate for each of the groups during the emergence phase. The primary source for this material was the Women's Collection, Special Collections, at the Northwestern University Library, Evanston, Illinois. Secondary sources--newspapers, books, and periodicals--provided general information about the groups studied and their activities, as well as supplying additional pieces of discourse.

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